1	BEFORE THE ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION
2	JEFF HATCH-MILLER CHAIRMAN
3	WILLIAM A. MUNDELL COMMISSIONER
4	MARC SPITZER COMMISSIONER
5	MIKE GLEASON COMMISSIONER
6	KRISTIN K. MAYES COMMISSIONER
7	N THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF Docket No. W-01303A-05-0405
8	ARIZONA-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY, INC., AN ARIZONA CORPORATION, FOR A
9	DETERMINATION OF THE CURRENT FAIR
10	VALUE OF ITS UTILITY PLANT AND PROPERTY AND FOR INCREASES IN ITS
'	RATES AND CHARGES BASED THEREON
11	FOR UTILITY SERVICE BY ITS PARADISE VALLEY WATER DISTRICT.
12	VALLEY WATER DISTRICT.
13	IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF Docket No. W-01303A-05-0910 ARIZONA-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY
'	FOR APPROVAL OF AN AGREEMENT
14	WITH THE PARADISE VALLEY COUNTRY CLUB.
15	CLUB.
16	DUGGIG DEDLY DDIEF
16	RUCO'S REPLY BRIEF
17	The Residential Utility Consumer Office ("RUCO") replies to Arizona American
18	Water Company ("Arizona American" or "Company") and the Arizona Corporation Commission
19	Staff's ("Staff") Post Hearing Brief as follows.
20	
21	INTRODUCTION
22	For the most part, on the issues that are in dispute, the Company and Staff are
23	requesting special rate making treatment. RUCO's policy, to which it remains true in this case,

 example, in this case, RUCO does not oppose the proposed ACRM because RUCO acknowledges that the new federal arsenic standard presents a unique situation that necessitates special rate consideration.

However, where there is no reason to deviate from standard rate making principles and regulatory accounting practices, the Commission should not be persuaded by arguments that it do so. The standard rate making principles and regulatory accounting practices advocated by RUCO have been tested over time and strike a fair balance between the interests of ratepayers and the utilities. The fact that RUCO is advocating the Commission not stray from these principles and practices because the results are arguably not favorable to the public or have a harsh result does not make RUCO's position "extreme" or "wrong-headed." Company's Opening Brief ("Company's Brief") at 15, 42.

RUCO is charged with looking out for the interests of ratepayers. In doing so, RUCO is concerned with making well-reasoned, consistent recommendations that adhere to sound and tested regulatory principles. RUCO considers not only the effect of its recommendations on the Company and its ratepayers but also the precedential effect on future rate cases before this Commission. For each of its final recommendations, RUCO has consistently adhered to sound rate making principles and legal theories and in its Opening Brief ("Brief"), RUCO has presented its arguments in a straightforward manner. The same cannot be said for either the Company or Staff.

The Company, in its Opening Brief, has chosen to either willfully mischaracterize or wrongfully denigrate RUCO's position on most of the disputed issues. The Company attempts to create confusion by addressing non-issues and/or mischaracterizing RUCO's position in such a manner that it appears RUCO has "lost its way" or has forgotten whom it represents. Company Brief at 18, 38. The Company's bizarre statements are a non sequitur and the

 Commission should not be persuaded by such transparent gimmickry. The Commission should make its Decision based on sound rate making principles and legal theories.

Staff, like the Company, has also chosen to deviate from generally accepted rate making principles. Staff's approach, however, is conciliatory. Staff has chosen to meet the Company at some mid-point on most of the issues that remain in dispute. While this approach may arguably appear equitable to the Company, it is not equitable to ratepayers and is not appropriate justification for deviating from generally accepted rate making principles. On the remaining issues in dispute Staff's reasons do not justify deviating from generally accepted rate making principles. The Commission should only consider recommendations that are supported by sound rate making principles and are consistent with the law in Arizona.

RECOVERY OF FIRE FLOW INVESTMENTS

When a third party requests the construction of additional water infrastructure from a regulated utility it is the standard regulatory practice as well as a requirement of the Commission that the third party provide an Advance in Aid of Construction or a Contribution in Aid of Construction. Transcript at 159, R-11 at 8. Staff and the Company admit that this is the standard regulatory practice. Transcript at 159, 502 – 503. Here the Town, a third party, is requesting additional water infrastructure to meet its own imposed fire flow requirements and neither the Company nor Staff is recommending that the Town make a Contribution or Advance.

From the Company's perspective, the fact that the fire flow improvements will protect the lives and property of its customers and that its customers are supposedly willing to pay for the improvements causes the Company to wonder "Whom does RUCO represent in this case?" Company Brief at 38. The Company further hopes that RUCO will re-evaluate the

1 Company's view of the public interest and reconsider its position. Id. In support of its position, 2 3

5 6

8 9

7

11

10

13

12

14 15

16

18

17

20

19

21

22

23 24

the Company only lists eight one sentence bullet points. In sum, the arguments in support of the Company's position as follows: a) the Town is asking for the improvements, b) the Town cannot fund the improvements and, c) the improvements would benefit its ratepayers. Id. at 37-38.

With the exception of the faulty claim that the Town cannot legally fund the fire flow improvements, 1 RUCO does not take issue with the other two facts advanced by the Company in its Brief. However, as RUCO has clearly and consistently stated, the question at issue is not whether the Town needs the improvements, can fund the improvements or if the improvements are in the public interest, but who should pay for the improvements. Transcript at 411-412. Pursuant to generally accepted rate making principles, the Town, the third party requesting the improvements should fund the discretionary improvements it is requesting. The Commission should not embed municipal costs into basic public service rates and should not allow local elected officials to usurp its authority and obligation to set just and reasonable rates. Id.

The Company does not address the issue of who should pay other than to say the Town cannot legally fund these improvements. Because it purports to believe the Town cannot fund the improvements, the Company argues that ratepayers should fund the improvements. RUCO will not repeat the arguments it made in its Brief other than to highlight the following points. First, the Commission does not regulate fire flow standards. See Brief at 3. Second, the discretionary expenditures will not produce any additional revenue that weighs against including the improvements in rate base. Id. at 4. Finally, there is no legal impediment preventing the Town from funding the discretionary improvements. Id. at 5. The Town's

¹ RUCO has shown that the Town is not legally prohibited from funding the improvements. Brief at 5-9.

Fire Code does not require the Company to pay for the discretionary improvements and to interpret the Code to impose such an obligation on a public utility impinges on the Commission's exclusive Constitutional rate making authority. Brief 9-11.

Staff too evades the issue of which party should pay for discretionary improvements and, like the Company, relies on the public benefit argument to support its request to ratebase the discretionary improvements. Staff's Brief at 7. Staff also adds that its recommendation was based on its desire to encourage improvements in public fire safety and minimize deferral of costs pursuant to the Commission's accounting Order adopted in Decision No. 68303. Staff's Brief at 5. Finally, Staff has unquestioningly bought into the Town's claim that it was legally impeded from funding the improvements and suggests that the Commission should ratebase the improvements because the Commission may be the only alternative to bring the water system up to the Town's fire code standards. Id. at 8-9.

As discussed above, the public benefit is not the issue. Staff's notion of encouraging public fire safety through a rate case is completely misplaced. Again, the Commission has no Rule or policy setting fire flow standards. There is no statute or other law that suggests the Commission regulate fire flow. If the Commission feels compelled to set fire flow standards among the utilities it regulates, it should consider such an action in a separate Rule making Docket, not in a rate case. This type of ad-hoc policy making will potentially result in unfair and unreasonable rates.

Moreover, Staff's desire to minimize the deferral of costs is presumptuous. The Commission never made a determination as to what rate treatment it would afford the discretionary investment in Decision No. 68303. Minimizing deferral costs only has meaning if the Commission is going to approve ratebase treatment of those costs. The Commission has not made that determination and therefore minimizing the costs is not an appropriate reason

for deviating from the normal regulatory treatment of the discretionary costs at this time. The Commission should not ratebase the discretionary fire flow improvements.

Finally, Staff is simply wrong on the issue of the Town's legal ability to fund the improvements. But, for the sake of argument, even if Staff were right and the Town was legally impeded from funding the discretionary improvements, the fact that there may be no other funding source is not an appropriate reason for the Commission to ratebase the costs. Staff describes the case law on this issue of the Town's ability to fund the improvements as "large and complex." The reality is that the Supreme Court of Arizona addressed this issue squarely in *Town of Gila Bend v. Walled Lake Door Company*, 107 Ariz. 545, 490 P.2d 551 (1971). RUCO demonstrated in its Brief that applying the Supreme Court's analysis in *Gila Bend* without question validates the Town's authority to fund the improvements. Brief at 5-9. Staff provides no legal analysis to support its sweeping conclusion and RUCO is not aware of any modification or changes to the *Gila Bend* case made by the Arizona Supreme Court, a Federal Court, or the legislature.

Staff, however, is satisfied to speculate that the Town's attorney considered the case law in his conclusion that the Town cannot fund the investment, and notes that as far as the record is concerned, there is nothing that would indicate that the Town could legally fund the investment. Staff's Brief at 8. Again, Staff is simply wrong. *Incredibly, it is the Town attorney himself, Andrew Miller, who in an exhibit introduced into evidence by the Company in this case told the Town's Water Committee that there is no legal impediment to the Town paying for the cost of fire flow infrastructure in the Town's other water utility, Berneil Water Company. A-31. Mr. Miller's statement is consistent with what the Arizona Supreme Court said in the City of*

Gila Bend case and is compelling evidence that the Town can legally fund the infrastructure². The Commission should reject the Company and Staff's request to ratebase the discretionary fire flow improvements.

GAIN ON SALE OF LAND

Typically, when there is a sharing of a gain on the sale of utility assets, the standard rate treatment is to adjust the Company's ratebase to reflect the ratepayers' share. In this manner, ratepayers are timely credited for their portion of the gain. The Company proposes a surcredit on each customer's monthly bill with no adjustment to ratebase. The Company computes the surcredit based on a five-year payout period, while Staff and RUCO propose a three-year amortization. Transcript at 334.

RUCO explained at the hearing that the only unresolved issue concerning the gain is the method of distribution of the gain to ratepayers. Transcript at 334, lines 7-8. The Company in its Brief addresses a non-issue – the payment of the capital gains tax associated with the sale. Company's Brief at 4-5. In fact, RUCO's concern is that a surcredit (whether computed on a five-year or a three-year amortization) allows the Company to get the benefit of the time value of money while the gain is being repaid through the surcredit. Transcript at 334. While a three-year payout of the gain shortens the period during which the Company would hold the ratepayer's funds, a three-year amortization still allows the Company to hold ratepayer money interest-free. It is therefore appropriate to reduce the ratebase to reflect the gain as a

² The only difference between the Berneil improvements and the Company's improvements is the magnitude of the cost, which is irrelevant to the issue of whether the Town can pay.

means to compensate customers for the time value of the Company holding their funds while it pays out the surcredit.

RATE CASE EXPENSE

The Company's recommended rate case expense, \$301,832 is excessive given the circumstances of this case. The bulk of the Company's request has to do with the Cost of Capital issue. The Company argues that it had no choice but to spend the large amount for the retention of the Brattle Group because "...the Commission has been using a flawed method to adjust returns on equity for differences in capital structure." Company's Brief at 7 at 8. The Company believes that its view of the cost of equity issue is a matter of first impression for the Commission. Id. The Company also advances the preposterous notion that its Cost of Capital arguments provide benefits only to ratepayers – not to its shareholders –which is why the Company is recommending the ratepayers pay the entire cost associated with the Company's efforts to correct the perceived flawed Commission practice. A-17 at 2.

All of the parties in this case are in agreement that the Company's capital structure is 63% debt and 37% equity. R-10 at 3. The parties also agree on the Company-proposed weighted cost of debt of 5.4%. Id. The main point of contention is the premium that each party allows for the risk associated with the Company's debt-heavy capital structure. Id. This point of contention is common in rate cases where a company has a debt-heavy capital structure. The only issue that is novel is the Company's proposal to address this risk premium. The fact that the Company's proposal results in the highest recommended Cost of Equity among the parties is unquestionable evidence that shareholders would benefit from the Company's argument if it were successful.

The Company has chosen to correct the Commission's "flawed" method by presenting financial theories that have only been accepted by one other public utility commission in the country. Transcript at 223. While RUCO is not suggesting that the Company should not be able to present its arguments, ratepayers should not have to bear the burden of paying even one penny towards the Company's novel, flawed, and anti-ratepayer approach.

The Company continues to describe the subject matter as complex and refers to the discovery efforts it made. Company's Brief at 9-10. RUCO does not deny that the Company engaged in discovery in this matter. But the issues that are contentious in this matter have become contentious because the Company has chosen to advance novel theories or practices that deviate from normal rate making standards and Commission practices and policies and that have been rejected elsewhere. Ratepayers should not have to pay and therefore encourage the Company to take novel positions that would result in increased and unjustified utility profits. The Commission should reject the Company's recommended rate case expense and accept RUCO's recommendation of \$73,179.

PENSION EXPENSE, NORMALIZE PAYROLL AND PAYROLL TAXES

The Company has proposed an Arsenic Cost Recovery Mechanism ("ACRM"), which according to the Company is based solely on "actual costs and costs eligible for recovery, which are depreciation, gross return and recoverable O&M." A-19 at 15. The actual recovery of the ACRM costs will commence under the ACRM "after new arsenic facilities are in service and are in compliance with the new US EPA standard for arsenic." Now, prior even to the completion of the new arsenic facilities the Company is asking for special rate treatment to recover the labor costs associated with an arsenic plant operator it hired after the conclusion of the test year. The Commission should deny the Company's request to embed in the test year

operation and maintenance expenses the annual labor cost of an arsenic plant operator, of a plant that still is under construction.

It appears that the Company is making this request because of its realization that it will have to wait until the Company's next rate case in 2010 to request recovery for the operator's labor costs. Company Brief at 13. The Company, not RUCO or Staff, proposed the ACRM, which by itself is an exception to standard rate making procedure. RUCO, recognizing the unique circumstances that exist because of the new federal standard has agreed to the ACRM. A major reason why RUCO agrees with the ACRM is because the Company will recover its expenses after the facilities are in service and used and useful which is consistent with how the Company describes its ACRM. Id. In actuality, the Company is now asking for something different than what it proposed in its ACRM. The Commission should reject the Company's request to prematurely include the costs associated with the arsenic plant operator.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND GENERAL ALLOCATED COSTS

The Company's Brief addresses the following issues:

- 1) Annual Incentive Program ("AIP"), Company Brief at 15-16
- 2) Reorganization/Downsizing Expenses, Id. at 17
- 3) Ice, Id. at 17-18
- 4) Other, Id. at 18.

AIP

RUCO's recommendation is based on a sharing of the costs in proportion to benefits received by ratepayers and shareholders. RUCO is not proposing that the Company eliminate its Incentive Plan. Rather, RUCO's argument is to shift the cost burden onto shareholders for

that portion of the plan that benefits only shareholders, and not ratepayers. This is fair, and as the Company says – "There is little to add."

REORGANIZATION, DOWNSIZING AND NON-INCENTIVE PAY EXPENSES

These expenses are non-recurring and atypical of test-year expenses. R-6 at 21. The standard rate making principle concerning these types of costs is to exclude them. The Commission should disallow the other reorganization, downsizing and non-incentive pay expenses.

ICE

Not surprisingly, the Company focuses on this issue to highlight what it considers the extreme positions that RUCO has taken in this case and to paint RUCO as an uncaring and insensitive agency³. Company Brief at 17 - 18. The Company goes as far as saying that "RUCO appears to have lost its way." All the while, the Company fails to address the issue in question.

The issue here, as with the fire flow improvements, concerns the rate treatment of the Company's discretionary expenses. The standard rate treatment regarding discretionary expenses is to not include them in rate consideration. The issue has nothing to do with RUCO's sensitivity to the needs of the Company's workers, and the fact that "ice is needed to protect employees from possible death in the Arizona sun." Company's Brief at 18. If that were the case, the Commission would also have to consider the employee's food and shelter expenses, as they are also necessary to protect employees from "possible death in the Arizona sun." The Commission should consider only those expenses necessary to provide

³ According to the Company it takes a "hard heart to lump ice for field-workers in the same category as smoothies and donuts."

discretionary expenses like ice.

OTHER EXPENSES

generally accepted rate making principles.

PROPERTY TAXES

PROPERTY TAXES ASSOCIATED WITH THE MTRF

Motorola has refused to pay the property taxes for the MTRF and the Company has not pursued the matter. As a result the Company's test year expenses include an amount for these taxes. The Company argues that it accounted for the property tax associated with the MTRF through its property tax calculation, which utilized the methodology approved by the Commission in the past. A-15 at 38.

water service to the Company's ratepayers. The Commission should reject the inclusion of

the Company believes ratepayers should pay for indoor plants that "beautify the workplace,

take in carbon dioxide and expel oxygen." Company's Brief at 18. This position proves

RUCO's point that once the Commission allows discretionary expenses every cost imaginable

becomes fair game. This is exactly why it is so important that the Commission adhere to

The Company is critical of RUCO's position as being "extreme", yet in the same breath

The issue, of course, has nothing to do with which interpretation of ADOR's property tax formula is appropriate. The issue concerns whether or not the actual property taxes attributable to the MTRF during the test year should be considered as part of MTRF's operating expenses and therefore reimbursed by Motorola. The Company, by claiming the property taxes are not part of the MTRF's operating expenses during the test year, overstates its property tax expense by \$42,000.

1 | 2 | M' | 3 | M' | 4 | ex | 5 | inc | 6 | inc | 7 | ta: | 8 | ne | 9 | In

MTRF's actual property taxes are known for the test year. Since the Company owns the MTRF, the actual property taxes of the MTRF should be included as part of MTRF's operating expenses and reimbursed by Motorola. The generally accepted regulatory practice is to include property taxes as part of a Company's operating expense. The Company's interpretation of its unresolved contractual dispute regarding the classification of the property taxes should not exclude the actual property tax expense from rate consideration. The dispute needs to be determined outside of this rate case under the remedies provided in the contracts. In the meantime, the Commission should reject the Company's determination that the MTRF's actual property tax expense should be included in rates.

Without exception, property taxes are part of the cost of operating a business. Here,

PROPERTY TAXES BASED ON THE ADOR FORMULA

The Company states that ADOR methodology understates its property taxes and has been repeatedly rejected by the Commission. Company Brief at 14. It is true that the Commission has rejected the ADOR methodology. Nonetheless, RUCO has repeatedly shown that the ADOR methodology is the most accurate estimate of the Company's property tax. In this case, as in others where the actual tax figures for the test year are known, the ADOR formula is consistently more accurate than the Company's methodology. Here, using the Company's as well as Staff's methodology, property taxes for 2005 would have been overstated by \$51,048 which would have allowed the Company to over earn for several years until that level of tax was actually assessed. R-5 at 23. The Commission should reject the Company's and Staff's recommended property tax calculation and accept RUCO's recommended property expense of \$170,334. RUCO Post Hearing Schedule RLM-3, page 4.

WORKING CAPITAL, INCOME TAX EXPENSE, RATE DESIGN

Neither the Company nor Staff has presented any arguments in their Briefs supporting their recommendation that cash working capital should be \$0. Company Brief at 4, Staff Brief. RUCO stands by its arguments in support of its working capital recommendation as more fully set forth in its Brief at pages 23 – 25.

RUCO also has nothing further to add to the arguments it made regarding income tax expense and rate design as set forth in its Brief at pages 27-29.

PLANT HELD FOR FUTURE USE ("PHFFU")

The Company and Staff both discuss the Company's use of the backup equipment for Well No. 16 in their Briefs. Company Brief at 5 - 6, Staff Brief at 10 – 11. This is no longer an issue as RUCO has agreed that the back-up equipment at issue is used and useful and has agreed to include it in ratebase. Transcript at 368-369, RUCO Brief at 28. RUCO's final ratebase recommendation includes the costs associated with the back-up equipment.

COST OF CAPITAL

RUCO continues to urge the Commission to adopt RUCO's recommended 10.00 percent return on common equity for Paradise Valley. The Company proposes to adjust for its debt-heavy capital structure by employing a generally non-accepted financial theory called Equitable Leverage Compensation. Company Brief at 28. The Company equates Equitable Leverage Compensation to the Commission's use of a hypothetical capital structure in situations where a company is highly leveraged. Id. The result of applying the Company's novel financial theory is 12% cost of equity recommendation, which clearly overcompensates for the Company's financial risk.

1 2 fair amount of basis points to add to the results of its DCF and CAPM analysis. This is the 3 generally accepted way the regulatory industry accounts for financial risk. In this case, RUCO considered the adjustment the Commission authorized in the Company's most recent case to 5 arrive at its recommendation. The Commission should adopt RUCO's recommended Cost of 6 Capital.

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

CONCLUSION

RUCO recommends the Commission reject the Company's proposal to ratebase discretionary fire flow projects. RUCO recommends that the Company's rate base be offset by the ratepayer's portion of the gain on the sale of the plant located on Casa Blanca Drive. RUCO recommends that the annual distribution of the gain be recorded on the income statement as a credit to operating expense. Further, RUCO recommends the Commission adopt its remaining recommendations to the following:

RUCO, as well as Staff, addressed the higher debt ratio by determining what would be a

- 1) Rate case expense - \$73,179;
- 2) Pension Expense, Normalized Payroll and Normalized Payroll Expense – Reject the Company's request to include expenses associated with arsenic recovery which include the following;
 - 1) Payroll –(\$41,603)
 - Payroll Tax –(\$4,295) 2)
 - 3) Pension expense -(\$2,205)
- 3) Administration and General Allocated Expenses –
 - 1) AIP-\$12,795
 - 2) Reorganization/Downsizing and non-incentive pay - \$42,441

1		3) Ice - \$161		
2		4) Security Renovations and Repairs - \$127;		
3	4)	Property Taxes – adopt RUCO's net adjustment of (\$44,561);		
4	5)	Working Capital – cash working capital (\$61,432). Total working capital		
5		(\$129,155);		
6	6)	Cost of Capital – cost of equity-10%, weighted average Cost of Capital 7.10%;		
7	7)	Income Tax Expense - \$206,490;		
8	8)	PHFFU – (\$7,825) in ratebase.		
9	Finally, RUCO recommends the Commission adopt its three-tiered inverted rate design.			
10				
11	RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 26 th day of May, 2006.			
12				
13				
14	Daniel Pozefsky Attorney			
15				
16	AN ORIGINAL AND FIFTEEN COPIES of the foregoing filed this 26th day of May, 2006 with:			
17				
18	Docket Control Arizona Corporation Commission 1200 West Washington			
19				
20	Pnoenix, Ar	zona 85007		
21	COPIES of the foregoing hand delivered/ mailed this 26 th day of May, 2006 to:			
22				
23				

'	Lynranne
	Chief Administrative Law Judge
2	Hearing Division
3	Arizona Corporation Commission
3	1200 West Washington Phoenix, Arizona 85007
4	THOCHIX, AHZOHA 00007
	Teena Wolfe, Administrative Law Judge
5	Hearing Division
	Arizona Corporation Commission
6	1200 West Washington
7	Phoenix, Arizona 85007
_ ′	Christopher Kempley, Chief Counsel
8	Legal Division
	Arizona Corporation Commission
9	1200 West Washington
	Phoenix, Arizona 85007
10	B: (
11	Ernest Johnson, Director
''	Utilities Division Arizona Corporation Commission
12	1200 West Washington
	Phoenix, Arizona 85007
13	
	Craig A. Marks
14	Corporate Counsel, Western Region
4-	American Water
15	19820 N. 7 th Street, Suite 201 Phoenix, Arizona 85024
16	Prideriix, Arizoria 65024
	Robert J. Metli
17	Snell & Wilmer L.L.P.
	One Arizona Center
18	400 E. Van Buren
	Phoenix, AZ 85004-2202
19	
20	
20	
21	Ву
	Ernestine Gamble
22	
23	